

Message Text

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ACTION ORM-02

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 EUR-12 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 DHA-02 AID-05

IGA-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06

PRS-01 SP-02 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /073 W

-----181101Z 077459 /21

R 180845Z JAN 77

FM AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5759

INFO USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

USMISSION USUN

C O N F I D E N T I A L ALGIERS 0155

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SREF, AG, SS

SUBJECT: SAHARA: UNHCR RENEWS APPEAL FOR US ASSISTANCE TO
SAHRAOUI REFUGEES

REF: (A) ALGIERS 0147, (B) 76 STATE 293274, (C) 76 ALGIERS 2774

1. UNHCR OFFICIAL GHASSAN ARNAOUT CALLED ON ME JAN 16 TO
PRESENT ORAL REQUEST FROM SADRUDDIN AGHA KHAN TO AMBASSADOR
PARKER FOR U.S. ASSISTANCE TO SAHRAOUI REFUGEES. ARNAOUT IS
ON TEMPORARY DUTY IN ALGIERS AS UNHCR REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE
SAHRAOUI REFUGEE PROBLEM. HE SAID THAT HIS PRIMARY MISSION
HERE WAS TO RAISE MONEY AND THAT SADRUDDIN HAD INSTRUCTED HIM
TO RENEW TO AMBASSADOR PARKER EARLIER APPEAL FOR SUPPORT
(76 ALGIERS 2774). IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION, ARNAOUT SAID HE
UNDERSTOOD THAT SADRUDDIN HAD HAD MEETING IN WASHINGTON ON
SAHRAOUI REFUGEE QUESTION.

2. ARNAOUT MADE FOLLOWING COMMENTS ON SADRUDDIN'S RECENT
VISIT TO TINDOUF REFUGEE CAMPS:

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A. UNHCR ATTITUDE: SADRUDDIN, ARNAOUT SAID, HAD
BEEN ANXIOUS TO AVOID MISUNDERSTANDINGS SIMILAR TO THOSE
THAT OCCURRED AS RESULT OF UNSYG'S EMISSARY RYDBECK IN
A APRIL 1976 AND HAD INSTRUCTED ARNAOUT TO OBTAIN
GUW EFROM ALGERIANS THAT VISIT WOULD NOT BE
EXPLOITED POLITICALLY. ALGERIANS HAD BEHAVED CORRECTLY,
AND PRINCE APPEARED SATISFIED BOTH WITH STAY IN CAMPS,

DURING WHICH HE LIVED AS DID REFUGEES, AND WITH MEETING WITH BOUMEDIENE AND BOUTEFLIKA JAN. 15. ARNAOUT REITERATED UNHCR'S DETERMINATION TO DEPOLITICIZE ITS SAHRAOUI RELIEF EFFORT AND EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE IN ORGANIZATION'S ABILITY TO DO THIS.

B. NUMBERS OF REFUGEES: LIKE SADRUDDIN, ARNAOUT REFUSED TO ESTIMATE NUMBER OF REFUGEES IN SAHARA. HE SAID, HOWEVER, THAT THERE WERE "THOUSANDS" AND THAT NUMBER HAD GROWN SINCE HIS VISIT EIGHT MONTHS EARLIER. HE ADDED THAT NUMBER OF REFUGEES OBSERVED DURING VISIT HAD MADE IT CLEAR ONCE AGAIN TO SADRUDDIN THAT SAHRAOUI REFUGEE PROBLEM WAS LARGE AND REAL.

C. REFUGEE NATURE AND STATUS: MOROCCAN THESES ON NATURE AND STATUS OF REFUGEES, ARNAOUT SAID CATEGORICALLY, WERE FALSE. SPECIFICALLY:

I. NUMBER OF REFUGEES OBVIOUSLY MUCH GREATER THAN LOW FIGURE GIVEN BY MOROCCANS.

II. REFUGEES WERE SAHRAOUI ARABS. IN THIS CONNECTION, REFUGEE CAMP LEADERS HAD NO INTEREST IN SEEING OTHER ETHNIC GROUPS BEING PLACED ON COMMODITIES DOLE AS THIS WOULD REDUCE AMOUNT AVAILABLE TO TRUE SAHRAOUI

III. MOST UNLIKELY THAT THERE WERE ALGERIANS IN CAMPS; FOR GOA TO FORCE ITS CITIZENS TO LIVE IN SUCH CONDITIONS WOULD BE "MONSTROUS," AND IN ANY CASE, GOA WOULD BE UNABLE TO DO SO.

IV. ON QUESTION OF FREEDOM TO LEAVE CAMPS, ALGERIANS AND SAHRAOUI CONTROLLED ACCESS, BUT A "KNIFE-AT-THROAT" AND CONCENTRATION CAMP ATMOSPHERE
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ABSENT.

D. UNHCR PROGRAM: ARNAOUT CONFIRMED FIGURES GIVEN FOR UNHCR PROGRAM IN ALGIERS 147. HE POINTED OUT AGAIN THAT THIS PROGRAM DESIGNED TO AID 50,000 REFUGEES AND THAT ALGERIANS HAD NOT INFORMED UNHCR OF ANY INCREASE IN THIS NUMBER. ARNAOUT SUBSEQUENTLY INFORMED US THAT WORLD FOOD PROGRAM HAS DECIDED TO PROVIDE COMMODITIES FOR 50,000 REFUGEES FOR THREE-MONTH PERIOD. UN RES REP HERE SAYS THAT AMOUNT OF FOOD TO BE CONTRIBUTED UNDER THIS PROGRAM IS 20,000 TONS.

3. COMMENT: AS ARNAOUT SAID, HE IS HERE TO RAISE MONEY, AND HIS PITCH ON REFUGEES TAILORED TO SERVE THIS AIM. WHILE ONE MIGHT NOT WANT TO ACCEPT ALL HIS POINTS UNQUESTIONINGLY, ALL AVAILABLE EVIDENCE STRONGLY SUPPORTS HIS AND SADRUDDIN'S STATEMENTS THAT THERE ARE MANY "THOUSANDS" OF PEOPLE LIVING IN DESPERATE CIRCUMSTANCES IN TINDOUF AREA. THIS, AS SADRUDDIN AND ARNAOUT POINT OUT, IS GENUINE HUMANITARIAN CONCERN

WHATEVER POLITICS OF QUESTION MAY BE.

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Message Attributes

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